

## **Testimony regarding HB 5037**

Submitted By:

Michelle Morin and Michelle Yargeau,

Good evening, Sen. Oster, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. Our names are Michelle Morin and Michelle Yargeau and we own/run Country Kids Childcare and Early Learning Center, LLC in Putnam.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the Governor's proposed budget for the Office of Early Childhood. We believe that proposed budget is not nearly enough to put a dent in the financial childcare crisis that we are facing.

Centers have to rely on the tuition paid by the families. This is not enough to keep doors open anymore. We do live in a lower income area and are only able to raise our prices minimally. These families are struggling in this pandemic to make ends meet as it is and if childcare is too expensive, they are unable to work.

The staffing shortage is an everyday struggle. Worrying if we can staff all of the classrooms from day to day. Having to pay overtime to the devoted teachers who give their all each day. The wage we are able to offer these amazing teachers is not livable. It is at poverty level. These teachers are caring for our future. The future of Connecticut. This job has so many responsibilities. It is not just dealing with a "product". However, many devoted teachers have to go elsewhere for better paying jobs and jobs providing benefits such as health insurance and 401K plans. This budget is not enough.

There are several problems that are not being met by this budget and need to be done immediately:

- Permanent funding for equitable wages and benefits for teachers
- Subsidizing the cost of care so that parents don't have to make the equivalent of a mortgage payment for childcare each month.
- Increasing the reimbursement rate for Care 4 Kids to bring it up to current market rates.
- Offering free or reimbursable state mandated trainings, i.e. First Aid/CPR, Medication Administration, Continuing Education Requirements...
- Offering free or reimbursable state mandated fingerprinting and background checks.
- The expenses of cleaning supplies, masks, and other expenses has just grown exponentially.

The minimalization of Childcare needs to be changed. The crisis is real. If people are not able to go to work for lack of childcare our economy is in dire straits. The general working public, executives, politicians need to feel what we are going through because "no one gets it!"

We would appreciate your support and efforts to bring this crisis to the forefront.

Best Regards,

Michelle Morin and Michelle Yargeau, co-directors/co-owners

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